Tony beer bar, smokehouse set for tough block of Mason

Barbary Coast PR also in the building

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

TO THE BEDRAGGLED scene on lower Mason Street, the Tenderloin’s eastern boundary, add three new elements — an upscale beer cafe, a mural depicting the glory days of the street a century ago and old-fashioned police work.

A group of investors, including Alex Clemens of Barbary Coast Consulting and Chuck Stilphen, an East Bay purveyor of high-end Belgian ales, paid $5.2 million for 34-38 Mason St., a brick-and-masonry four-story built after the quake and fire. They say they’re spending $450,000 to renovate the top two floors for Barbary Coast, a public relations agency with clients from the Central YMCA to Jewish Home for the Aged and the Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

The high-ceilinged, two-story-high ground floor is being made over to Stilphen’s precise specifications to operate a Tony beer emporium and authentic North Carolina-style smokehouse restaurant. He hopes to open before May 1 but has no name for it yet.

Barbary Coast has about a dozen employees. Stilphen says he’ll need a staff of 25-30 to run the kitchen and bar from noon to 2 a.m. daily.

“People want to know,” he said during a community meeting at the site in mid-November. “They’re trying to test Stilphen: Would his new restaurant be a going business?

“An old neighborhood tradition of providing free food to seniors?” he was asked.

Stilphen looked queasy and remained silent as others in the crowd of two dozen asked: ‘What about rowdy crowds?’ someone asked. Clemens answered, ‘These are homes.”

The building
used to house the Polo
Lounge, the poor man’s
Original Joe’s.

Then a man who lives at INDC’s Ambassador Hotel across the street decided to test Stilphen-Would his new restaurant honor “an old neighborhood tradition of providing free food to SOHO tenants?” he was asked.

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A Reluctant morning sun made it numbly cold at U.N. Plaza Fountain one Thursday in late December, but that hardly daunted Mary Liz Harris. Bundled up with gloves and hat, she’s there to count these gulls and other birds and she’s ready for anything. Indeed, she yearns for surprise and adventure as part of the Audubon Society’s 113th Christmas Bird Count that takes place over three weeks in December and into January. This year’s count in San Francisco was two days after Christmas.

“We’re trying to get an idea of the kinds of species and populations,” Harris explains, slipping on the backpack, notebook in hand. “But the count’s not scientific.” Too much territory, too few counters. “Maybe you could get an accurate count if you had one person on every block counting at the same time.”

San Francisco, one of 1,759 bird census centers throughout the nation last year, has been sending avid volunteer Audubon counters into the city and northern San Mateo county since 1983. This year, 140 signed up to count birds, but only 112 showed, among them Harris, a 10-year veteran.

The Tenderloin has few parks with trees that birds love for nesting. It makes counting difficult and certainly not as riveting as, say, bird-rich Hunters Point Park or the Presidio that may yield 50 to 100 species.

“Nobody wants the Tenderloin,” says Harris, who lives on Turk Street. “I do it because it’s my neighborhood, and I always find surprises. Younger people, who dominate the city’s dozen other larger groups of counters, walk too fast, she says, adding that she’s ‘a bit over the hill.’

Harris is the sole counter for the Tenderloin. Last year there were five. Her territory is Divison Street to Van Ness Avenue to Califor- nia, then east, in the Financial District. But she’ll only hit five areas while counting along the way. Counters typically gravitate to water and parks but her district, light on parks, doesn’t abut ocean or Bay and hence fewer species. Her husband, Richard M. Harris, has the more interesting area, SoMa to AT&T Park, including the Embarcadero starting at the Ferry Building. She’ll join him later. Dan Murphy, one of two Audubon members who compile the city’s grand totals, knows Harris value. “She’s a godsend,” he says, “to cover downtown, what others derisively call the ‘pigeon route.’”

Volunteers counted nearly 61,000 birds in the city last year and 176 species, the tip of an iceberg of unknown size, yet helpful to gauge avian growth and decline. The TL, which was combined last year with much of SoMa, had 38 species then, but this year has shrunk drastically.

The 2012 count will eventually be a record 179 species and 55,247 birds, a drop but well within the city’s average 40,000-60,000 range. The record year was 1986 when schools of herring showed up as a “natural phenomenon” in the Bay behind what is now AT&T Park, laying their eggs on rocks, pili-
Tony beer cafe being readied on Mason St.

Blue-ribbon beginning for St. Anthony’s new digs

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Photo by MarJorie Beggs

by Tom Carter

T

he building of St. Anthony’s new dining hall officially began when ground was broken Jan. 24 be

fore a big neighborhood crowd, staff, financial supporters, a few supervisors, Mayor Ed Lee and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, who once brought her children and grandchildren to volunteer as food servers at the old dining room.

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ning room on the main floor will rise 10 stories above the Golden Gate Avenue and Jones Street intersection. The first two floors will also have a free clothing program, a social work center and an

emergency food pantry Above that, St.

Anthony’s partner, Mercy Housing Cali

fornia, will manage 90 units of housing for low-income, formerly homeless se

nators.

Officials called the $22.5 million project a “miracle,” but were quick to add that it still needs $2.5 million more to complete, which they expect to raise by June 13, the Feast of St. Anthony’s.

After speeches, the entourage tramped gingerly down the soft dirt road to the bottom of the site’s pit where gleaming shovels awaited. Fa

ther John Hardin blessed the ground. Completion is expected in fall 2014.

A grand crew of celebrities, including Mayor Lee and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, de

scend into the pit where St. Anthony’s once stood to conduct a celebratory ground

breaking for the new building. Father John Hardin blesses the ground.

by Tom Carter

To

be a beer geek. They are different.

By the day the junction of Market, Turk and Mason streets is a site for low level drug dealing, usually quiet sellers — de

spite their ominous hoodies and busy cell phones — and tranquil buyers.

That first block of Mason Street is also home base for six or seven street drinkers. Most days find the group down on the sidewalk sharing pulls on tall boy malt liquors or Royal Gales or Taka vodkas, their backs propped against the Bir

ston Hotel or 50 Mason Social House door.

As the drinks kick in the crum

ny metal pipes appear and somebody pass

es along a hit.

At the night the play gets more seri

ous. Dealers are in competition, buyers seem desperate. Voices rise, arguments spill from the sidewalk past parked cars out into the street. Threats of death and violence are openly shouted. It’s a mess, but if you’re not on Mason Street to buy or sell drugs, or sex, you can sidle past the action.

Jean Lee, who lives in his condo at the nearby Garfield, is familiar with the problems of Mason Street. “It isn’t the prostitution so much, it’s the drug deal

ing that makes it difficult,” he said. After Clemens and Stiphon’s brief presenta

tions, Lee left the meeting satisfied: “It would be good for the street to have another well-run business.”

The building used to house the Polo Lounge, the poor man’s Original Joe’s, back when restaurants served ample portions and nobody was there for more than a quarter-hour of fame.

Years after Polo’s succumbed, Terrance Allen, then an Entertainment Commission member, opened his Blue Cube at the site. The Cube was known primarily for its glass-walled smoking room that snubbed its nose at city of

ficials bent on enforcing tobacco bans.

But the Blue Cube failed to be eventu

ally replaced by the Crash Club — three floors of music and bars — described by one clubgoer as ‘a true cesspit’ — that lasted less than a year.

Crash Club’s two-story-tall electric sign remains hanging over the street. Clemens says he likes it, so it’ll stay.

At Eddy Academy of Art University students led by instructors Carol Num

vely and Martha Wade are finishing a 40-by-20-foot mural at the base of the Brintol Hotel. The students have recre

ated a promotional postcard from the early 1900s depicting the Breakers Cafe at that corner and its orchestra led by Rigo, a self-styled ‘Hungarian Gypsy.’

The mural is a project of Uptown Tenderloin Inc., a 5-year-old nonprofit that touts the historic architecture and cultural outlets that once flourished in the Tenderloin, and the Brintol Hotel, whose owner donated the paint.

The Main Library’s San Francisco His

tory Center supported the postcard and fleshed out the historical data.

Passe

ry have stopped to kick

and to praise the work. People seem genuinely pleased to see the mural and a scene of a part of their neighborhood from long ago. Nunnelly said.

TL Capt. Joe Garrity announced in a recent newsletter ‘An all out effort has been made with plain clothes oper

ations in the Turk and Mason corridors to abate the street level drug dealing by outsiders.”

Using information residents pro

vide as well as observations from a ‘ver

tical patrol’ of police stationed on the fourth-floor roof area of the Warfield Building at Market and Taylor, foot and bicycle patrol officers from Tenderloin Station have targeted dealers at Turk and Mason. Also, plainclothes officers have been conducting drug “buy and busts” on Mason.

Garrity expressed confidence that the arrests coupled with the stay-away orders, will help ease the problems near the beleaguered intersection.

I urge people to call in the activity on the street. You don’t have to leave your name, just a callback number.

We’ll get working on your current status.

The Extra. “You know, the vast majority of people we arrest for dealing don’t live or work in the Tenderloin.”

— The Staff

Blue-ribbon beginning for St. Anthony’s new digs

by Tom Carter

This issue of Central City Extra is the last with Tom Carter as our full-time community reporter, the backbone of our award-winning operation.

Tom is retiring after eight years to spend more time with his young grandson and the rest of his family, and to work on his personal writing. Tom will continue to write for The Extra, but his daily pres

ence will be sorely missed.

Please go to 241 6th Street, San Francisco, CA for applications.

The Todco Housing wait list in open for the Bayanihan House and The Hotel Isabel. If your name is currently on any Todco Housing Wait List and you wish to remain on the list, please call the Todco Marketing Office at 415-957-0227 on Fridays.

HOUSING APPLICATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED FOR SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY BUILDINGS (SRO’S)

by Tom Carter

The building of St. Anthony’s new dining hall officially began when ground was broken Jan. 24 before a big neighborhood crowd, staff, financial supporters, a few supervisors, Mayor Ed Lee and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, who once brought her children and grandchildren to volunteer as food servers at the old dining room.

The new building with a bigger dining room on the main floor will rise 10 stories above the Golden Gate Avenue and Jones Street intersection. The first two floors will also have a free clothing program, a social work center and an emergency food pantry Above that, St. Anthony’s partner, Mercy Housing California, will manage 90 units of housing for low-income, formerly homeless seniors.

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Birds of the Tenderloin

By the greatest percentages, "says Murphy. The dumps got covered and fast food flocks, count-compiler Murphy says. But open city dumps used to attract huge numbers of birds ever since, glancing up at building ledges she says. Maybe 700 of each nest in the city teacher at Alameda county juvenile phy, a retired special education history teacher at Alameda county juvenile hall, has taught field ornithology at the California Academy of Sciences.

"Ravens and crows are growing by the greatest percentages," says Murphy, "the area's special education history teacher at Alameda county juvenile hall. She recently taught on-field ornithology at the California Academy of Sciences. Maybe 700 of each nest in the city now, but she doesn't know why, though they're smart enough to follow any food source, and are adept nest raiders.

"But birds have really taken a hit in San Francisco," Murphy says, "they're on the skids. As buildings supplanted open spaces, doves and blackbird populations plummeted about 50% from the 1980s, and quail almost went extinct. Removing the junk food and fallen limbs — prized bird hangouts — takes a toll along with feral and domestic cats. Poisonous outdoors, for rats."

In particular, also kill lots of birds. The survivors are "building-adapted birds" such as purple finch, pipsqueak, and cliff swallows. birds that treat skyscrapers like hills.

"We've seen more and more of the birds' habitat as we build in the inner city," says Mike Lynes, executive director of Golden Gate Audubon Society. "We're faced with how we manage what's left." Data from counts help determine the division of the association's advocacy.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS

New! Harris sees the northern edge of the plaza, where the roofs are shingled and tile swallow flocks, count-compiler Murphy says. But open city dumps used to attract huge numbers of birds ever since, glancing up at building ledges she says. Maybe 700 of each nest in the city teacher at Alameda county juvenile phy, a retired special education history teacher at Alameda county juvenile hall, has taught field ornithology at the California Academy of Sciences. Maybe 700 of each nest in the city now, but she doesn't know why, though they're smart enough to follow any food source, and are adept nest raiders.

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RAVENS, CROWS GAINING

Gulls have moved into the inner city because of our changing habits. Open city dumps used to attract huge flocks, count-compiler Murphy says. But the dumps got covered and fast food flocks, count-compiler Murphy says. But open city dumps used to attract huge numbers of birds ever since, glancing up at building ledges she says. Maybe 700 of each nest in the city teacher at Alameda county juvenile hall, has taught field ornithology at the California Academy of Sciences. Maybe 700 of each nest in the city now, but she doesn't know why, though they're smart enough to follow any food source, and are adept nest raiders.

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Laurie Lazer and Darryl Smith let a thousand artists bloom in the central city

Their 509 Cultural Center is a wide-ranging wellspring of art and inspiration in the neighborhood

by Marjorie Beggs

With RAIN threatening on a cool winter day, Tenderloin residents Thomas Griffin and Cheryl Conti waited in a short queue to get their favorite pants fixed—at an arts venue like no other in San Francisco.

Seamster Michael Swaine, who teaches ceramics at Mills College and UC Berkeley, monthly sets up his treadle-operated White rotary sewing machine on the sidewalk as you enter the Tenderloin National Forest. He repairs neighbors’ clothes for free, calling his 11-year-old branchchild the Free Mending Library.

Swaine personifies the Forest and its nonprofit parent, 509 Cultural Center: artistically professional, uniquely modern and wimsical. Co-founded by Laurie Lazer and Darryl Smith 25 years ago, 509 Cultural Center has grown into a trio of enterprises that also includes the 509 Ellis gallery and the Luggage Store Gallery on Market Street.

“Laurie and Darryl have a rare, special thing,” says Swaine, who, besides his mending service has had several solo ceramic shows at 509 Ellis and contributed to group shows at the Luggage Store Gallery. “They have a completely different relationship to their artists than other curators. It’s all about what they’re willing to say yes to.”

Besides saying yes to an eclectic collection of more than 1,000 artists, they’ve managed to persevere in the central city’s tough location for any small enterprise.

“Having lasted 20 years is in itself an accomplishment,” says Lazer and Swaine said in a video celebrating the anniversary of their art venture. “But it may have just been our stubbornness.”

Today, Lazer and Smith are rising stars. The December issue of San Francisco magazine mentioned them as “pioneers in the mid-Market revival” and among the “cultural mafia— the most influential impresarios, mentors and visionaries” in the San Francisco arts community.

Since Lazer and Smith moved to 1007 Market St. just after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, they’ve transformed a floundering visual and performing arts venue into a destination that nurtures artists, many from the neighboring Tenderloin, while drawing in audiences from the central city and far beyond — 2,000 people a month — and mounting 10 shows annually.

Lazer and Smith also made a silk purse out of son’s ear. Cohen Alley, once a garbage-strewn, drug-infested cul-de-sac off Ellis Street near Leavenworth, was one of the first arts projects they spearheaded. In the 1980s. Dedicating it to the Tenderloin National Forest in 2009, it’s a surprising green spot in the heart of the Tenderloin. As a dirty, dark alley way in those days, the police averaged three calls a day about nefarious goings-on.

Now, Smith estimates that 10,000 people nearly wander in to browse or attend performances, art openings, food fêtes.

The space, 25 feet wide and 135 feet deep, is enclosed by residential buildings. It boasts lush plantings, a clay oven, an artistic stone path, birdhouses, dramatic lighting and murals that run several stories up the sides of the buildings.

The Forest, the Luggage Store Gallery and its gallery annex next door draw 25,000 people a year; numbers that enamor artists and funders, who are pleased but not surprised by Lazer and Smith’s success.

“I love those guys,” says Frances Phillips, who directs the Walter and Elaine Haas Fund’s arts grantmaking and its Creative Work Fund, which has twice funded projects of 509 Cultural Center, the official name of Lazer and Smith’s nonprofit organization.

“I deeply admire their commitment to artists that’s all a piece with their relationship, but we weren’t a couple again for about 10 years.”

Over two decades, many major Bay Area foundations have supported 509 Cultural Center. So, too, have the prestigious Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, and the City’s Arts Commission and Grants for the Arts, top arts funder in the Bay Area.

“I deepened our commitment to artists that’s all a piece with their commitment to the neighborhood,” Phillips says. The Forest? “A beautiful, playful addition to a dense streetscape.”

Sculptor and installation artist Michael Arcega, who’s “Baby and the Nacirema” exhibition at the Market Street gallery ran last year from mid-October through November, has known Lazer and Smith for eight years. He’s impressed at how relaxed and professional they are.

“When I approached Laurie about this show, we bounced ideas around, let them marinate a bit, then nailed things down just two months before we opened,” recalls Arcega, who has exhibited at the de Young, is an art department faculty member at Stanford and was a 2012 Guggenheim Fellow in Fine Arts in New York. “The special thing about Laurie and Darryl is that they’re so casual, but they gave me permission and encouraged me to do whatever I wanted with the space.” Such trust in the artist is rare, he says.

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Laurie and Darryl are so mission-driven, so pure, so clear about what they’re doing,” says Kary Schut, executive director of Grants for the Arts, a Luggage Store Funder since 1991. “They’re all about linking the community and the artists. They’ve fashioned a template that makes the creator of the art and the audience or participation resources for each other.”

TENDERLOIN STARS

Laurie Lazer and Darryl Smith, 509 Cultural Center co-founders and directors, stand near a collapsible Pacific outrigger canoe — the handmade “baby” of artist Michael Arcega’s “Baby and the Nacirema” exhibition at Luggage Store Gallery.
its time: a self-help, cooperative model with tenants improving the building themselves and sharing day-to-day management. Smith joined a handful of artists living there in a collective that took over the ground-floor space next to the alley, a former bar, as their work gallery. (The Aarti was reshaped again last March, opening after being rehabbed as housing for formerly homeless, at-risk 18- to 24-year-olds who are seriously mentally ill.)

Smith was still an Aarti co-op artist in 1988 when he had the idea that Lazer might be interested in joining the collective. "I invited her to come check it out," he says. And the rest is history — their history. "I never lived at the Aarti," Lazer explains, "but what they were creating there was so interesting — the people were so diverse and I was really impressed by the co-op meeting." In 1987, TNDC had become the collective's fiscal sponsor, allowing donations to it to be tax-deductible. Its first support came from Franciscan Charities, then soon after from Vanguard Foundation, Lazer says. Two years later, the Luggage Store Gallery got its own nonprofit status.

That was a busy year. At its height, the arts collective had 17 members, mostly Aarti residents, but by 1989, most had moved on. Lazer and Smith kept 509 Ellis going, dubbing the gallery the 369 Cultural Center.

The gallery was active, and Cohen Alley began emerging, albeit slowly, as an outdoor venue. Smith's room at the Aarti faced the alley, and he remembers bemoaning the waste of space, a precious commodity in the tenderloin. He and others cleaned it up, enough to use it to host birthday parties for neighborhood kids.

"Then we got involved with SLUG (the erstwhile SF League of Urban Gardeners) and started by planting a redwood tree and a Japanese maple," Smith says. "We did some live art events and some installations, all pretty temporary." But Cohen was still basically an alley, a concrete slab with curbs.

When the Aarti was damaged by the '89 earthquake, the artists were ousted from 509 Ellis. About that time, Lazer was pedaling along Market Street, she says, when she saw the For Lease sign on 1007 Market, an elegant, two-story building constructed in 1907. A clothing store occupied the basement, ground floor and mezzanine, but the top floor, the one for lease, was flooded with light and much bigger than 509. Gold script on the freeze below the Victorian cornice dubbed the building "The Complete Luggage Store." "It was absolutely beautiful," Lazer says. She and Smith signed a 10-year lease, naming their new home, of course, the Luggage Store Gallery. When they were able to reopen 509 Ellis, in 1995, it became the Luggage Store Annex.

**ALLEY IS TRANSFORMED**

Back at Cohen Alley, neighbors began participating in its transformation, letting Smith know what they'd like to see there. In 1990, Smith met Mohammad Nuru of the Department of Public Works, now its director. He found ways to help us develop the space," Smith says, "even giving us access to DPW's landscape artist for ideas and help." After years of negotiation and planning, the Tenderloin National Forest's murals and lush plantings have replaced a squalid alley between residential buildings.

"Perhaps they will lead you home."

Follow the fallen homeless leaves scattered on the sidewalks of the neighborhood. Perhaps they will lead you home. Or to The Tenderloin National Forest.
tions with the city, and after then-Mayor Willie Brown threw his support to the site in the late 1990s, the alley was leased to 509 Cultural Center for $1 a year as a neighborhood commons.

Today, the Tenderloin National Forest annexe have about seven shows a year, mostly by artists in residence. Residencies, for three or four artists a year, last up to three months. The artists can mount their final project at either the Forest or the annex, or, sometimes, use them as staging areas for a larger exhibition at the Market Street gallery. That was the case last fall with the “Winterlands” show, a collaboration of four artists, two from an experimental arts space in Hanover.

509 Cultural Center also presents regular music programs, spoken-word performances, poetry slams, readings and Swaine’s monthly Free Mending Library. The choreographer and dancer Amanda Tabor-Smith, Darryl Smith’s sister, is another Forest regular. She’s been developing a dance-theater piece called “Our Daily Bread” that she performs at other local venues. But once a month, she brings her performance mantle and invites Forest neighbors to “Fresh From the Oven” — a cob oven, made of stone and gathered wet sand and clay built in the center of the Forest.

“It’s a community-engagement event that brings people together and invites Forest neighbors to ‘Fresh From the Oven’ — a cob oven, made of stone and gathered wet sand and clay built in the center of the Forest.”

“Kevin certainly had his own dialect, other classes and other cultures. It’s a challenge he relishes, as does Lazer. Diversity — ‘otherness’ — figures strongly in their curatorial style. They seek out artists for shows and consider proposals from artists with the goal of ‘mixing it up,’ Lazer says. ‘We’ve changed a bit since we started out — we used to identify artists we wanted to show and gave priority to those from the neighborhood,’ she says. ‘Now, we also look for artists just starting their career, and artists of color and women and transgenders, and some who’ve begun to succeed in the art market. Mostly, we want artists to experiment and do their vision.’ That’s our strong point.”

Lazer says that she and Smith regularly navigate the five blocks between their two main venues, though he spends more time at the Forest and she at the Luggage Store Gallery. They bought the Market Street building with several investors in 1999, forming an LLC, a move that was a little nerve-wracking. Lazer says, but felt like the right thing for us to do. ‘They’re hoping to buy out their LLC partners soon, put in an elevator and a roof garden, among other dreams. And they’re hoping to fit into a mid-Market that, after decades of false starts, is becoming hot. Old buildings are being razed for a new shopping complex one block east. Zendesk and Zook have set up offices in that same block. Twitter, 800-employees strong, opened its new offices west. Dolby Labs moves nearby this year and the list goes on.’

Lazer wonders if they’ll fit in. ‘Some people may want our building to disappear,’ she says. Amy Cohen doubts that. As director of neighborhood business development for the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, Cohen says the Luggage Store has been a ‘catalyst in’ mid-Market for a long time.

“The city has helped create a new brand for the area based on what was already there, like the gallery,” says Cohen. “It may be under the radar of the more cultural-savvy, more image-driven environment so they can compete for the best employees.”

“The eclectic, eccentric world of the urban, second-floor gallery can seem worlds away from the ground-level Forest, deep in the Tenderloin with its abundance, inviting flowers, ornamental trees. It’s all-inclusive and welcomes diverse visitors, just like the neighborhood,” Smith says. ‘If there’s any challenge there, it’s that people might have issues being comfortable with otherness — other classes and other cultures. It’s a challenge he relishes. As does Lazer.”

Photo by Mark Doneza

OBITUARIES

Ralph Kevin Urbancic
Found dead in his room

Jackie Ikeda flashed a mischievous grin and her eyes sparkled as she described how she and Ralph Urbancic “hit it off right away” when she moved to Civic Center Residence a year ago.

“Heh, what times we had Friday and Saturday nights out by the garbage cans,” said Ikeda, one of 14 residents who attended the Jan. 24 memorial for Mr. Urbancic. “I’m sure gonna miss him — we talked about serious stuff, but also had some really good times. He gave me $25 and I still have it up on a shelf in my room Jan. 14 by property management staff. He was 55.”

Richard Beard, an employee of Tenderloin National Forest, said he was using to seeing Mr. Urbancic daily somewhere in the hotel, and was concerned when three days had passed without any contact.

“Kevin sure was a character, some-time janitor, sometime maintenance man, a wonderful sense of humor,” Beard said. “We all make mistakes. He helped me clean up one of our rooms. He was a generous person who cared about his friends. On some of my worst days — Fleming paused to wipe his eyes — he was patient and there for me.”

“Mr. Urbancic was always a wild child and a perfect gentleman at the same time,” the life of the party: “a man who couldn’t express what was going on inside him and, simply, ‘someone who really understands what you mean’.”

Homelessness, familiar to most residents here, often is reflected in what they share when they come together to talk goodby to a fellow resident. This day, one said he didn’t know Mr. Urbancic, but had come to the memorial anyway.

“I can’t remember him exactly. I’m happy in the memorials take place. There’s lots of love and respect here for people who’ve died — and I’m glad he didn’t die on the streets.” — Marjorie Beggs

Lazar resident Cheryl Conti, left, watches seamstress Michael Swaine at Tenderloin National Forest repair one of three pairs of pants she’s brought him to fix for free. “I used to sew myself,” she tells Swaine, “but now I’m legally blind.” Pauline Autet, a student of Swaine’s at Cal, watches him work.

(888) 205-6552
www.sfrhp.org

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12 bird species counted in Tenderloin

Mary Liz Harris counted 602 birds in the Tenderloin during the Audubon Society’s annual avian census. Here are the 12 species she recorded, their numbers and a few of her comments.

**by Tom Carter**

**RED-TAILED HAWK**

“They can always be in the Tenderloin and you can see them often on the cross of St. Boniface Church.” The red-tailed hawk is the most common hawk in America among 14 species. It does far more rodents at 120 mph.

Photo by Debbie Rissley

**WILLOW GULL**

“This is the big gull. Its eye is black. I think they’ve decreased in the Tenderloin.” Average weight is 2.2 pounds, wingspan up to 36 inches. A red spot marks the lower bill near the tip. They eat everything from little sea creatures to garbage and have even been known to nurse on sleeping mother seals.

Photo by Dean Faccando Wiremuida Commons

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER**

“They’re all over the city and up on Telegraph Hill, very beautiful. They are energetic bird and hop from branch to branch, hard to see — warblers are like that. But its sound is very familiar to me and that’s how I first recognize it. I love their coloration. They have a yellow rump.” In winter, it will visit feeders for sunflower seeds, suet, raisins and peanut butter.

Photo by Dean Faccando Wiremuida Commons

**AMERICAN CROW**

“They’ve always been here and they’re recognized by their caw, caw sound. They’re easily confused with the larger crows. Totally black. They’re gregarious. I see them on my fire escape.” Used for years as symbols for impending doom, crows are the smartest of all birds and have demonstrated toolmaking ability and self-awareness in mirror tests. Their total brain-to-body mass ratio is equal to great apes, slightly lower than in humans.

Photo by Walter Segurini Wiremuida Commons

**BREWER’S BLACKBIRD**

“They’re very common in the Tenderloin and you can tell them from the red-winged. The males are purplish and the females brownish. They’re also found all over the city — very successful at living — and are gregarious.” They are the West’s version of the grackle but striking bright yellow eyes make it spooky and its raspy song isn’t pleasant.

Photo by Lee Kansas SFUPS

**HOUSE SPARROW**

“They’re not as common as they once were in Chicago, but I think they’re increasing and will with more green space. Very common to see them with pigeons and gulls. They’re black, gray and white and my husband says it looks like they’re wearing a Greek soldier’s helmet.”

Photo by Flogographers.com.au

**NEW GULL**

“It’s not always here and comes in when it’s cold after the first rain. It sounds like a squeaking door. You see them at Fifth and Powell, U.N. Plaza and on light fixtures.” It’s the smallest of North America’s white-headed gulls.

Photo by Anas Avery

**TOWNSEND’S WARBLER**

“Not common in the Tenderloin — my first in 15½ years! But I’ve seen them on Telegraph Hill and at Laguna Honda. I never have heard it sing. It’s a nervous bird. The female is a beautiful head, yellow, black and gray. I think we’ll see more as the Tenderloin gets more trees and vegetation as it has been doing.”

Photo by Keith Bauer keithbauer.smugmug.com

**ROCK PIGEON**

“It’s the most prevalent bird in the Tenderloin but they are decreasing, too. I don’t see them on my fire escape anymore. I think the Tenderloin CBD’s cleaning (sidewalks) has done it.” Pigeons have been accused of carrying human diseases, but no attempt to eradicate the prolific beggars from city life has succeeded.

Photo by Alexander Gandhi Wiremuida Commons

**EUROPEAN STARLING**

“They came from England, I think, and I see more of them than I do red-winged blackbirds. They’re in Tenderloin trees and all over the city, incessant. I love seeing them.” And what’s startling about starlings is their ability to absorb sounds from their surroundings — including car alarms and even human speech patterns — and vocalize the stuff into their own calls. They are part of research into non-human language evolution.

Photo by Linda Tanner Wiremuida Commons

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**

“I’m real happy to see more of it in the Tenderloin. It’s in U.N. Plaza and Civic Center and near the Asian Art Museum where trees are. When they’re together they make magnificent sounds and you can be smooned.” It’s also the most abundant and best studied bird in America, some say. But during breeding season, watch out. Males sweep humans walking nearby.

Photo by Walter Segurini

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD**

“They seem to be expanding their territory in the Tenderloin. I used to see them just at Market and Jones and now I see them near the Asian Art Museum where trees are. When they’re together they make magnificent sounds and you can be smooned.” It’s also the most abundant and best studied bird in America, some say. But during breeding season, watch out. Males sweep humans walking nearby.

Photo by Bear Grimes Wiremuida Commons
ART EVENTS

Divas or Die Burlesque. EXiT Cate, 156 Eddy St., Saturdays, 8:30 p.m., Feb. 16, Mar. 16 and Apr. 13. Danny and the Deep Blue Sea, one-and-only by John Patrick Shanley, 8 p.m., Feb. 23, 24 and 25, EXiT. Stage Left, 156 Eddy St. Info: theater.org.


Take Me Away. S.F. Arts Commission Galleries and PhotoAlliance. Juried exhibition of City Hall, ground floor, Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-4 p.m., through May 10. A theme of real or imagined spaces that escape from the everyday into adventure and fantasy, more than 100 works by regional photographers and fine artists and larger bodies of works by photographers David Gardner, Rebecca Home and Alice Shaw. Info: start- commission.org/gallery/2013/take-me-away/.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Weekly Women’s Support Group. Tenderloin Self- Help Center’s support and social group for women, 290 Turk St., Thursdays, 11 a.m.-noon. Kickoff was on Jan. 31 for weekly drop-in sessions led by peer staff on topics relevant to women living in the Tenderloin. Requires no registration. Info: Jan Couvillon, 749-2143.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH


Healthcare Action Team. 2nd Wednesday of month. 1010 Mission St., Bayanihan Community Center, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Focus on increasing supportive home services, expanded eligibility for home care, improved discharge planning. Lunch break. Call James Chimento, 703-0188 x304.

Mental Health Board. 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS ad- visory committee, open to the public. Call: 265-3474.

SAFETY

SfOA Police Community Relations Forum. 1st Monday of each month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location varies. To receive monthly email info: 538-8100 x202.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting. 1st Tuesday of month, 6 p.m., police station Com- munity Room, 301 Eddy St. Call Suza Black, 345-7300. Neighborhood safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD

IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6. 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6 p.m., 290 Eddy St. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_district6@yahoo.com, a neighborhood improvement association.

Central Market Community Benefit District, board meets 2nd Tuesday of month, Hotel Whitcomb, 1231 Market St., 3 p.m. 360-3000, http://cen- tral-market.org.

Friends of Boeddeker Park. 2nd Wednesday this month, 3 p.m., Police Station Community Room, 301 Eddy St. Plan park events, activities and improve- ments. Contact Betty Troupee, 931-1126.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board. 3rd Thursday of month, 6 p.m. Works to pro- tect SfOA’s resources for all residents. Gene Friend Rec Center, 270 Sixth St. Info: Tim Figueras, 554-9352.

Gardner, Rebecca Horne and Alice Shaw. Info: sfarts- commission.org/gallery/2013/take-me-away/

Commissions Authority. Legislative aides: April Veneracion, get & Finance Committee and chair of Transbay Joint Forces Authority. Legislative aides: April Veneracion, Sunny Angulo and Matthias Mommers. Jane Kim@ sfgov.org 554-7970.

DISTRICT 6 SUPERVISOR

Jane Kim, chair of Rules Committee, member of Bud- get & Finance Committee and chair of Transbay Joint Forces Authority. Legislative aides: April Veneracion, Sunny Angulo and Matthias Mommers. Jane.Kim@sfgov.org 554-7970.

Visit sfmta.com/freemuni4youth for details and application.